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# THE MAFIA AND THE RIGHT

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IN THE FEBRUARY 6, 1982, edition of *The Nation*, Bertram Gross, a professor of urban affairs at Hunter College, published a story entitled, "Some Anti-Crime Proposals for Progressives." The article appealed to the left to steal some of the right's thunder by recognizing the serious problem of crime in America and to offer innovative methods for its control.

But, like the Reagan Administration, Gross appears to be concerned only about street crime and, like most liberals, is not at all troubled by the more serious problem of organized crime—which Gross implied was something less than organized.

Considering this attitude, shared by both the right and the left, it is no wonder that the underworld has an uncanny ability to thrive under either conservative or liberal governments. Conservatives—as we are seeing now through Reagan's "New Federalism" policies—decentralize power, making it easier for organized criminals to buy and sell state and local officials within their own jurisdictions. Meantime, liberals continue to be inflexible in their defense

of personal privacy, and balk at the suggestion of electronic surveillance—which, unfortunately, is the most effective means for gathering crucial intelligence on organized crime activities. Bottomlined, because of the general unpopularity of the organized crime issue among most politicians—the mob can and does support right-wing causes and civil liberties at the same time.

Organized crime continues to be America's fastest-growing business, and thus far during the Reagan Administration, its opportunities for future growth have been enhanced. According to a report prepared by the General Accounting Office last December, "Organized crime is flourishing... (It) is a billion-dollar business which affects the lives of millions of individuals and poses a serious problem for law enforcement agencies. The effects of organized crime on society are pervasive."

Yet, in the President's budget revisions last September, he imposed a one-third cutback of the FBI's investigations of gambling, prostitution, arson-for-profit, gangland murders, and pornography, according to an analysis prepared by Mary Thornton of *The Washington Post*. In

new undercover operations will be authorized" in fiscal 1982 against organized crime or white-collar crime. All of this came in the wake of a hiring freeze and dramatic staff reductions within the FBI.

Further, the administration has severely curtailed the investigative and enforcement abilities of the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Justice Department's Strike Forces Against Organized Crime.

And, on November 12, the Administration officially began dismantling the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the Treasury Department—which has been extremely effective in the war against organized

